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ABSTRACT

This study examined the effectiveness of secondary school tutoring services in the Chicago Public Schools, Illinois. During school year 2001-2002, researchers surveyed 4,211 students from four Latino plurality high schools. Survey questions addressed tutoring services. Five student focus groups were held at one school. Results indicated that many students were not attending tutoring if they needed homework assistance. Students either relied on their teachers or no one at all to help them improve their academic performance. Results did not vary significantly by school, race/ethnicity, grade level, or grade point average (GPA). Focus group students stated that they did not attend tutoring because they did not learn anything and because the teachers did not know enough to help them. Over 30 percent of students had been recommended to receive tutoring services. Students with mixed race/ethnicity had the highest rate of recommendation. About 26 percent indicated that they had attended tutoring when they were recommended to receive it. Of the total respondents, 6 percent indicated that their tutor had helped them improve if they were failing a class. Results varied by school, race/ethnicity, grade level, and GPA. Most students stated that nobody had helped them improve if they were failing a class. Recommendations include: establish well-developed tutoring programs; hire professional tutors; and advertise tutoring services more effectively. (SM)

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ISSUE BRIEF

Chicagoland Latino Educational Research Institute (CLERI) at Aspira Inc. of Illinois

April 2003

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How effective are schools' tutoring services?

By Virginia Valdez, Director of CLERI

Overview

There is ample research and evidence that indicate that students who fail classes and/or are enrolled below grade level are at the greatest risk of dropping out of high school. Tutoring is an important tool to help students improve their academic performance, advance to the next grade level, and successfully graduate. Thus, tutoring services are crucial to every school's dropout prevention program. While all the high schools in the Chicago Public Schools (CPS) provide tutoring, *how effective are schools' tutoring services?*

In order to address the question mentioned above, the Chicagoland Latino Educational Research Institute (CLERI) at Aspira Inc. of Illinois conducted research during school year 2001-2002. From winter of 2001 through spring of 2002, CLERI administered a survey, which consisted of 55 questions in English and Spanish, to a total of 4,211 students from four Latino plurality high schools within CPS. Although the major focus of the survey revolved around counseling services, several questions addressed tutoring services in order to obtain a comprehensive view of the various services students receive to help them stay in school and graduate.

In addition to the surveys, CLERI conducted five student focus groups at one of the four participating high schools. Students in the focus groups answered more in-depth questions regarding counseling services and other student services. Again, one of the issues addressed was tutoring services.

Purpose

The purpose of this issue brief is to:

1) Provide the major findings from CLERI's research on tutoring services;
2) Identify the challenges in schools' tutoring services; and
3) Present recommendations to CPS on how to improve tutoring services to strengthen schools' dropout prevention programs.

Characteristics of Students

A total of 4,211 students from four Latino plurality high schools completed CLERI's survey. A total of 1,043 students from School 1 completed the survey. A total of 1,380 students from School 2 completed the survey. A total of 666 students from School 3 completed the survey. A total of 1,122 students from School 4 completed the survey.

Of the 4,211 students who completed the survey, 4,186 students provided information on their race/ethnicity. Of those students, 13% were Caucasian, 13% were African-American, 63% were Latino, 5% were Asian, 5% were from other racial/ethnic groups, and 1% were from mixed racial/ethnic groups.

A total of 4,170 students provided information on their first language. English was the first language for 51% of the students. Spanish was the first language for 37% of the students. Chinese was the first language for 2% of the students. Polish was the first language for 2% of the students. The remaining 9% of the students indicated "other" as their first language.

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A total of 4,077 students provided information on whether or not they were in a bilingual or English as a Second Language (ESL) program. Of the respondents, 13% indicated that they were in a program, 56% indicated that they were not in a program, and 30% indicated that they were not eligible for the program because English was their first language.

A total of 4,204 students provided information on their grade level. Of the respondents, 32% were in ninth grade, 28% were in tenth grade, 22% were in eleventh grade and 18% were in twelve grade.

A total of 4,183 students indicated whether or not they had failed a grade. Of those students, 79% indicated they had not failed a grade and 21% indicated they failed a grade.

A total of 4,127 students provided information regarding their GPA. Three percent (3%) of those students had a GPA between 0-1.75. Nine percent (9%) of those students had a GPA between 1.76-2.25. Ten percent (10%) of those students had a GPA between 2.26-2.75. Twenty-seven percent (27%) of those students had a GPA between 2.76-4.00. The remaining 52% of those students indicated that they did not know their GPA. Thus, the majority of students did not know their GPA.

A total of 4,155 students provided information on whether or not they were enrolled in Advanced Placement (AP) or Honors classes. Of the 4,155 students, 32% indicated that they were taking these classes and 68% indicated that they were not taking these classes.

A total of 29 students from one of the four participating high schools participated in the five student focus groups. The student focus groups consisted of students of diverse racial/ethnic background from every grade level.

Major Findings[1]

The findings from CLERI's research project clearly demonstrate that many students are not attending tutoring if they need assistance with their homework. In addition, the findings indicate that students either rely on their teachers or do not rely on anyone to help them improve their academic performance. These results do not vary significantly by school, race/ethnicity, grade level or grade point average.

The student focus groups supported the findings that many students are not attending tutoring and do not rely on tutors to assist them with their homework. Students stated that they did not attend tutoring because they did not learn anything. They mentioned that going to tutoring was like going to study hall because no one explained anything to them and they were just expected to do their homework quietly. They also mentioned that the teachers, who were their tutors, did not know the subject well enough to help them improve their understanding of the subject matter. Thus, most of them opted not to attend tutoring because it was ineffective.

The following are some highlights from the research project:

- Thirty-one percent (31%) of the students indicated that they *had* been recommended to receive tutoring and 58% of them indicated that they *had not* been recommended to receive tutoring.
- Twenty-six percent (26%) of the students indicated that they *had* attended tutoring when they had been recommended to receive tutoring for their homework. Thirty-seven percent (37%) of the students indicated that they *had not* attended tutoring when they had been recommended to receive tutoring for their homework.
- Only 6% of the students indicated that their tutor had helped them improve if they were failing a class while 26% indicated their teacher and 31% indicated nobody.
- Only 7% of the students indicated that their tutor had helped them improve if they had failed a class in the past while 23% indicated their teacher and 32% indicated nobody.

[1] It should be noted that the total number of students who responded to each question does not equal the administered 4,211 because some students either provided invalid responses or did not provide a response. Thus, the following tables and charts only show valid responses. Also, the percentages shown in the tables may not equal 100.0% due to rounding. Comparative analyses by school, race/ethnicity, grade level and grade point average are provided where appropriate for a more comprehensive picture.

Awareness of Tutoring Services

Tutoring is available at the four participating high schools. Nevertheless, it is important to know whether or not students are aware that tutoring is available at their school. Of a total of 4,087 respondents, 93% indicated that tutoring *was* available in their school. The remaining 7% indicated that tutoring *was not* available in their school. The results did not vary significantly by school, race/ethnicity, grade level, or grade point average.

Outreach for Tutoring Services

Of a total of 4,107 respondents, 31% indicated that they *had* been recommended to receive tutoring. Another 58% indicated that they *had not* been recommended to receive tutoring. For the remaining 11%, this issue was not applicable to them.

The results varied by school, race/ethnicity, grade level and grade point average. The analysis by school indicated that students from School 1 had the highest rate (39%) of indicating that they *had* been recommended to receive tutoring. Students from School 3 had the lowest rate (23%) of responding that they *had* been recommended to receive tutoring.

Analysis by School				
	Tutoring recommended?			
	N/A	No	Yes	Total
School 1	11%	50%	39%	100%
School 2	10%	57%	33%	100%
School 3	12%	65%	23%	100%
School 4	9%	64%	27%	100%
Total Number of Respondents	434	2,383	1,290	4,107
Percentage	11%	58%	31%	100%

The analysis by race/ethnicity indicated that students of mixed race/ethnicity had the highest rate (36%) of responding that they *had* been recommended to receive tutoring. Caucasian and Asian students had the lowest rate (26%) of responding that they *had* been recommended to receive tutoring.

Analysis by Race/Ethnicity				
	Tutoring recommended?			
	N/A	No	Yes	Total
White/Caucasian	12%	62%	26%	100%
African-American	10%	58%	32%	100%
Hispanic/Latino	10%	57%	33%	100%
Asian	15%	58%	26%	100%
Other	10%	58%	32%	100%
Mixed	9%	55%	36%	100%
Total Number of Respondents	432	2,369	1,283	4,084
Percentage	11%	58%	31%	100%

The analysis by grade level indicated that ninth graders had the highest rate (35%) of responding that they *had* been recommended to receive tutoring. Twelve graders had the lowest rate (24%) of responding that they *had* been recommended to receive tutoring.

Analysis by Grade Level				
	Tutoring recommended?			
	N/A	No	Yes	Total
Grade 9	11%	54%	35%	100%
Grade 10	8%	60%	33%	100%
Grade 11	11%	59%	31%	100%
Grade 12	14%	62%	24%	100%
Total Number of Respondents	433	2,379	1,288	4,100
Percentage	11%	58%	31%	100%

The analysis by grade point average indicated that students with a grade point average between 0-1.75 had the highest rate (47%) of responding that they *had* been recommended to receive tutoring. Students with a grade point average between 2.76-4.00 had the lowest rate (17%) of responding that they *had* been recommended to receive tutoring.

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Analysis by Grade Point Average				
	Tutoring recommended?			
	N/A	No	Yes	Total
Don't know	8%	54%	38%	100%
0-1.75	13%	39%	47%	100%
1.76-2.25	5%	56%	39%	100%
2.26-2.75	10%	63%	28%	100%
2.76-4.00	17%	67%	17%	100%
Total Number of Respondents	423	2,347	1,264	4,034
Percentage	11%	58%	31%	100%

Attendance in Tutoring Services

Of a total of 4,041 respondents, 26% indicated that they *had* attended tutoring when they were recommended to receive tutoring for their homework. Thirty-seven percent (37%) of them indicated that they *had not* attended tutoring when they were recommended to receive tutoring for their homework. For the remaining 37% of students, this issue was not applicable to them.

The results varied by school, race/ethnicity, grade level and grade point average. The analysis by school indicated that students from School 2 had the highest rate (32%) of responding that they *had* attended tutoring when they were recommended to receive tutoring for their homework. Students from School 3 had the lowest rate (17%) of responding that they *had* attended tutoring when they were recommended to receive tutoring for their homework.

Analysis by School				
	Went to tutoring?			
	N/A	No	Yes	Total
School 1	35%	35%	30%	100%
School 2	37%	30%	32%	100%
School 3	33%	50%	17%	100%
School 4	40%	41%	20%	100%
Total Number of Respondents	1,478	1,511	1,052	4,041
Percentage	37%	37%	26%	100%

The analysis by race/ethnicity indicated that Asian and African-American students had the highest rate (33%) of responding that they *had* attended tutoring when they were recommended to receive tutoring for their homework. Latino students and students of "other" race/ethnicity had the lowest rates (24% and 25%, respectively) of responding that they *had* attended tutoring when they were recommended to receive tutoring for their homework.

Analysis by Race/Ethnicity				
	Went to tutoring?			
	N/A	No	Yes	Total
White/Caucasian	43%	31%	26%	100%
African-American	33%	34%	33%	100%
Hispanic/Latino	36%	40%	24%	100%
Asian	35%	32%	33%	100%
Other	36%	39%	25%	100%
Mixed	33%	39%	28%	100.0%
Total Number of Respondents	1,471	1,503	1,045	4,019
Percentage	36.6%	37.4%	26.0%	100.0%

The analysis by grade level indicated that tenth grade students had the highest rate (28%) of responding that they *had* attended tutoring when they were recommended to receive tutoring for their homework. Twelve grade students had the lowest rate (22%) of responding that they *had* attended tutoring when they were recommended to receive tutoring for their homework.

Analysis by Grade Level				
	Went to tutoring?			
	N/A	No	Yes	Total
Grade 9	35%	39%	27%	100%
Grade 10	32%	40%	28%	100%
Grade 11	37%	36%	27%	100%
Grade 12	46%	32%	22%	100%
Total Number of Respondents	1,476	1,509	1,050	4,035
Percentage	37%	37%	26%	100%

The analysis by grade point average indicated that students with a grade point average between 1.76-2.25 had the highest rate (33%) of responding that they *had* attended tutoring when they were recommended to receive tutoring for their homework. Students with a grade point average between 2.76-4.00 had the lowest rate (21%) of

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responding that they *had* attended tutoring when they were recommended to receive tutoring for their homework.

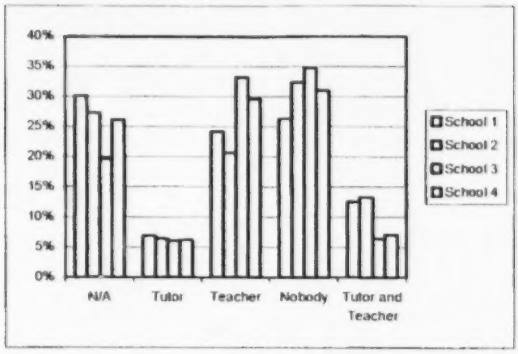
Analysis by Grade Point Average				
	Went to tutoring?			
	N/A	No	Yes	Total
Don't know	30%	43%	27%	100%
0-1.75	18%	53%	29%	100%
1.76-2.25	21%	46%	33%	100%
2.26-2.75	36%	34%	30%	100%
2.76-4.00	57%	23%	21%	100%
Total Number of Respondents	1,452	1,485	1,034	3,971
Percentage	37%	37%	26%	100%

Avenues of Academic Support: Present and Past

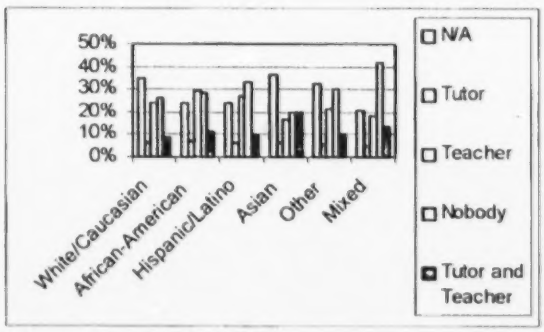
Present

Of a total of 4,057 respondents, 6% indicated that their *tutor* had helped them improve if they were failing a class. Twenty-six percent (26%) indicated that their *teacher* had helped them improve if they were failing a class. Thirty-one percent (31%) indicated that *nobody* had helped them improve if they were failing a class. Ten percent (10%) indicated that their *tutor and teacher* had helped them improve if they were failing a class. The remaining 27% indicated that this issue was not applicable to them.

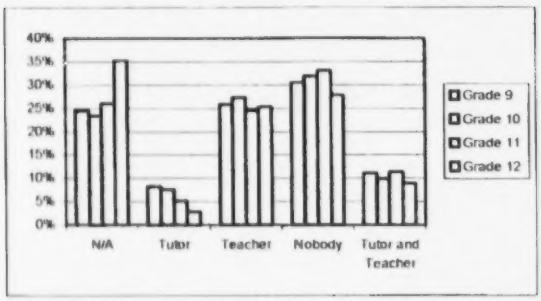
The results varied by school, race/ethnicity, grade level and grade point average. The analysis by school demonstrates that most students indicated that their teacher or nobody had helped them to improve if they were failing a class. At the four schools, the majority of students responded that *nobody* had helped them to improve if they were failing a class.



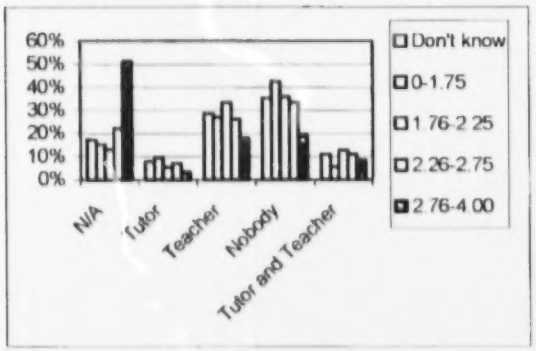
The analysis by race/ethnicity shows that most students indicated that their teacher or nobody had helped them to improve if they were failing a class. Caucasians, Latinos, Asians, students of "other" race/ethnicity, and students of mixed race/ethnicity responded that *nobody* had helped them to improve if they were failing a class at a higher rate than the remaining categories. African-Americans responded that their *teacher* had helped them to improve if they were failing a class at a higher rate than the remaining categories.



The analysis by grade level demonstrates that most students indicated that their teacher or nobody had helped them to improve if they were failing a class. The students at the four grade levels responded that *nobody* had helped them to improve if they were failing a class at a higher rate than the remaining categories.



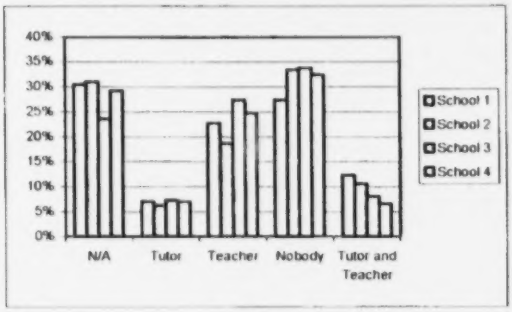
The analysis by grade point average shows that most students indicated that their teacher or nobody had helped them to improve if they were failing a class. The students from the five grade point average categories indicated that *nobody* had helped them to improve if they were failing a class at a higher rate than the remaining categories.



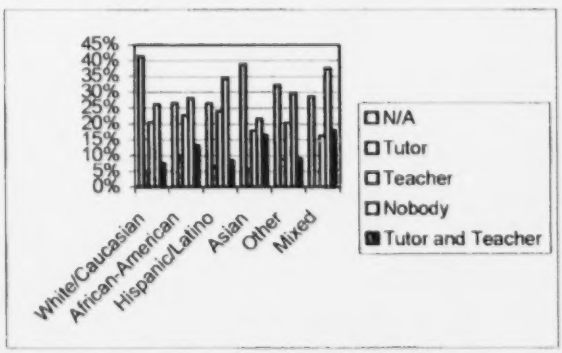
Past

Of a total of 4,037 respondents, 7% of them indicated that their tutor had helped them improve if they were failing a class in the past. Twenty-three percent (23%) indicated that their teacher had helped them improve if they were failing a class in the past. Thirty-two percent (32%) indicated that nobody had helped them improve if they were failing a class in the past. Ten percent (10%) indicated that their tutor and teacher had helped them improve if they were failing a class in the past. The remaining 29% indicated that this issue was not applicable to them.

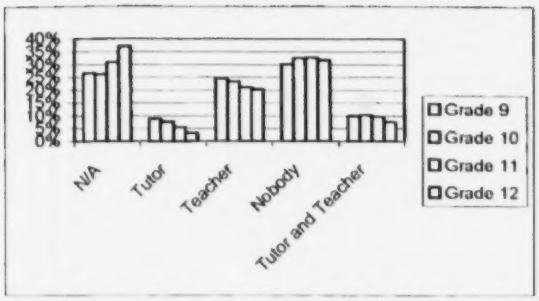
The results varied by school, race/ethnicity, grade level and grade point average. The analysis by school demonstrates that most students indicated that their teacher or nobody had helped them to improve if they were failing a class in the past. At the four schools, more students responded that *nobody* had helped them to improve if they were failing a class in the past than the remaining categories.



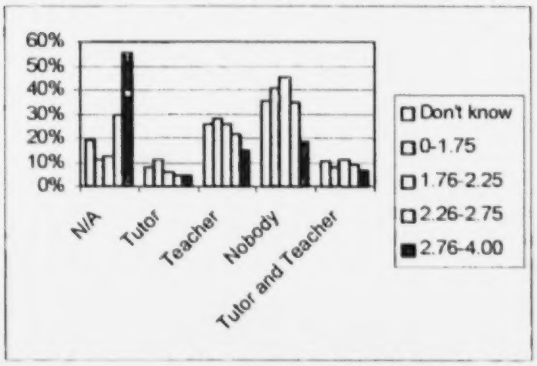
The analysis by race/ethnicity shows that most students indicated that their teacher or nobody had helped them to improve if they were failing a class in the past. The students of every race/ethnicity responded that *nobody* had helped them to improve if they were failing a class in the past at a higher rate than the remaining categories.



The analysis by grade level demonstrates that most students indicated that their teacher or nobody had helped them to improve if they were failing a class in the past. The students at the four grade levels responded that *nobody* had helped them to improve if they were failing a class in the past at a higher rate than the remaining categories.



The analysis by grade point average shows that most students indicated that their teacher or nobody had helped them to improve if they were failing a class in the past. The students at the five grade point average categories indicated that *nobody* had helped them to improve if they were failing a class in the past at a higher rate than the remaining categories.



Recommendations

In light of the student surveys and feedback from the student focus groups, CLERI recommends the following to address some of the challenges in the tutoring services:

- *Schools must have well-developed tutoring programs, student assessment instruments, and program evaluation plans.* If tutoring programs are not well-developed, schools will face challenges in its implementation. In addition, schools must have strong student assessment instruments to ensure that the needs of students are addressed. Schools must also have comprehensive program evaluation plans.

- *Schools must hire professional tutors.* The findings from the surveys indicate that many students are not attending tutoring even if they need it. The feedback from the focus groups indicates that one reason why students do not attend tutoring is because the tutors are not knowledgeable enough in the subject areas. Thus, it is imperative for schools to hire professional tutors who master the subject areas. By taking this action, students will obtain the services they need to improve their academic performance.

- *The tutor to student ratio must be low.* To ensure that the academic needs of struggling students are being met, schools must implement tutoring programs with low tutor to student ratios. Otherwise, tutors will not be effective in assisting all of their students.

- *Schools must advertise their tutoring services more effectively.* To encourage students to use tutoring services, schools have to do more outreach that highlights the purpose and benefits of the tutoring services.

- *Students, who are failing a subject area, must be required to attend tutoring.* Schools have to be more proactive in their role of helping students advance to the next grade level. Many students will not attend tutoring even if they need tutoring to improve their academic performance. Thus, the only way to ensure that all students in need of academic assistance attend tutoring is to make tutoring a requirement for students who are failing a subject.

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